FRUSTRATION AT DELAYS OVER ST. BRIGID'S

By Liam Timmins

Cllr Parsons at Gates

Councillors at Galway County Council continue to express their frustration with the HSE, regarding delays to progress developments at the derelict St. Brigid's Hospital campus and readying the site for market.

The former Mental Hospital site has been left derelict for the past decade following its closure in 2013. In recent months, the HSE have indicated their interest to ready the 183-acre property for market.

Galway County Council, in collaboration with Safe Ireland, have offered to purchase the 62-acre Nursing Home segment and building situated opposite the main facility, - sweeping all the way to the River Suck Bank - transforming it into a domestic refuge for women and children. The proposed shelter will offer short-term accommodation and services for victims county-wide during their times of need.

To date, the Council have received little communication from the HSE on this purchase. Director of Services Liam Hanrahan stated, despite making requests to the executive and having conducted a building survey, there "has been no communication for about six months" as of September 2023.

The HSE board claimed this resulted from a failure by the Council to confirm their intention to buy, with Assistant National Director of States Joe Hoary clarifying the HSE "won't delay its process" and will "move as quickly as (they) can".

Meanwhile the HSE executive announced they only recently appointed an external Professional Property Advisor to support the disposal of surplus lands and buildings on the campus. Mr. Hoary claims engagement will follow in the next few weeks to clarify requirements for disposal and to map expected timelines.

Leas-Cathaoirleach of Galway, Dr. Evelyn Parsons expressed her disappointment with the slow-pace of the HSE's action, being under the impression the PPA was appointed earlier. She underlined the disposal of these lands were matters of urgency explaining: "Our community watches in despair as these historically significant buildings fall into disrepair and ruin.

"It's disheartening to witness a protected building left unprotected from dereliction and dilapidation, undermining our heritage and history." She also clarified the progression of the domestic refuge was a pressing issue at hand, being crucial for the well-being and safety of children.

"This site holds immense potential for community use, including accommodation, tourism, heritage, arts, museum space, education, clinical space, and enhanced community care services. One suggestion I raised in line with the ethos of Sláintecare is on campus development of assisted living units for persons living with disability, like acquired brain injuries and supporting them in their own community with the necessary wraparound services attached" explained Dr. Evelyn.

Councillor Parsons concluded by calling for greater transparency from the executive going forward and for swifter action. She demanded that the HSE provide a concrete plan of action to salvage or develop the St Brigid's Hospital Property campus.

"It is imperative that the HSE recognizes this urgency immediately regarding the sale of the Nurse's Home for the Domestic Violence Refuge. The time for vague responses and inaction is over. We demand action from the HSE for our community, and we demand it now" Evelyn concluded.

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